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# AN INTRODUCTION TO BIBLE STUDY

Specially adapted for the Members of Adult Bible  
Classes, and for all Bible Students

BY

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# AN INTRODUCTION TO BIBLE STUDY

BY PROFESSOR AMOS R. WELLS

## The Bible Winning the World

It hardly need be said that all missionaries are Bible-lovers, and that the Book is intimately associated with their personal histories. The very beginning of modern missions was Carey's unfolding of Isa. 54 : 2, 3. When Judson was only three years old he surprised his father one day by reading to him a chapter of the Bible. Walter Lowrie, in the midst of the attack by Chinese pirates, was sitting calmly reading his Bible when they threw him into the sea.

When Allen Gardiner and his heroic comrades were found, starved to death on the shore of Tierra del Fuego, upon a rock was seen painted Ps. 62 : 5-8: "My soul, wait thou only upon God; for my expectation is from him." When Louis Dähne, laboring alone among the Surinam Indians, was bitten by a huge snake, fearing that the Indians would be charged with his death, he wrote quickly with a piece of chalk, "A snake has killed me." But at once Mark 16:18 came to his mind; he flung the snake away, and took no harm.

When Moffat asked to have the Hottentot servants brought in to family prayers his Boer host roared: "Hottentots! I'll call my dogs, and you may preach to them!" The missionary at once began to read and explain the story of the Syro-Phœnician woman, with her saying, "Even the dogs eat of the crumbs which

fall from their master's table." "Hold!" cried the Boer; "you shall have your Hottentots!" Such stories might be multiplied indefinitely concerning missionaries.

Nowhere better than in missionary history can the power of the Book be seen. A learned pundit in India began to read the Sanskrit New Testament, when the genealogy of Christ led him to look into the Old Testament. There, before any missionary had instructed him, he recognized the thread of Messianic prophecy, and from that recognition became a Christian minister.

A young Moslem in India, studying to be a missionary, read the New Testament in order to become able to vanquish the Christians in argument, and became a Christian missionary instead of a Moslem one. It was his habit to challenge his Moslem and Hindu opponents to take a series of topics each of which was to be expounded for fifteen minutes by him and them out of their respective scriptures; but their Bibles had so little to say on most of the great themes that he always confounded them.

A Mohammedan in Turkey would read the Bible till he foamed at the mouth in rage and flung the book from him; but after a few weeks he would be drawn to it again. This continued for ten years, till finally he gave it up and became a Christian. A young Chinese scholar, who had never even heard of the Bible, helped his sister read a copy of the Gospels

which she had bought, and was thereby converted.

A missionary in China, importuned to go to a distant village, went unwillingly, thinking himself merely called in to settle some dispute; but he found that three years before one of the villagers had bought a Bible, and from that book alone a church had been established consisting of some of the most influential men.

Jiwan Das was a robber and thug of India. One day he waylaid a native preacher, taking from him his clothes and some copies of the Bible. The latter he gave to his son, who read from them to his father. The boy stumbled on Num. 32:23: "Be sure your sin will find you out." The robber trembled, began to read for himself, and at last became an exemplary Christian.

It was a little Dutch Testament, found floating on the water of Nagasaki harbor in Japan, which gave Verbeck his first Bible class. When the missionaries saw that they must leave Madagascar, they hastened their translation of the Bible, and some of the native Christians walked sixty or a hundred miles to get copies. During the period of fierce persecution these Bibles were divided for safety among many owners; they were also buried, and dug up for secret reading. When the missionaries returned, after a quarter of a century, they found nearly four times as many Christians as they had left.

In every land the great missionaries, such as Carey, Martyn, Morrison, Moffat, Goodell, Schauffler, have been great Bible translators. Often, especially in Roman Catholic countries, missionary work has begun solely with the heroic labors of the colporteur.

Now it is the great Bible societies that are largely instrumental in the

translation and circulation of the Scriptures among the immigrants of our own country and on foreign fields. In 1908 the American Bible Society sold or gave away 1,895,941 copies of the Bible, the New Testament, and portions thereof. The figures of the British and Foreign Bible Society were 5,688,381, and those of the Scottish National Bible Society were 1,637,889. Twenty-three smaller Bible societies in Europe distributed 1,205,183 copies, making a total for that one year of 10,427,394 copies. Surely the Bible is the most popular book in the world!

The Bible has been translated into 500 of the chief languages and dialects of the world. The great missionary printing houses on foreign fields and the Bible society colporteurs send and carry the leaves of healing to all corners of the globe. Even where the readers of Scripture do not at once become Christians, a new uniform system of ethics is established, replacing the old barbaric customs. This world-wide circulation of the Bible is rapidly laying the foundation for a world-wide Christian civilization.

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### How the Bible Came Down to Us

The Old Testament was written in Hebrew, with ink, on rolls of parchment. The original manuscripts, none of which have been preserved, were written in a sort of script and not in the modern square characters; and only the consonants were written. The vowels, invented to preserve the traditional pronunciation, were inserted by minute characters above, within, and below the consonants. This improvement was made during the seventh or eighth century



## HOW THE BIBLE CAME DOWN TO US

after Christ by scribes called Massoretes ("students of the text"). There was no punctuation or spacing between the words, and some of the letters were much alike. Thus there were many possibilities of error as the Bible was copied by scribe after scribe; but the Jews were endlessly careful of the sacred text, and we have it in a wonderfully correct form.

The Jews buried or otherwise destroyed worn-out manuscripts of the Bible, so that very few old copies are left. The most ancient manuscripts of the Hebrew Bible known are the St. Petersburg manuscript of the prophets, dated 916 A.D., and a British Museum copy of the Pentateuch that may be a little earlier. The oldest copy of the entire Hebrew Bible is dated 1010 A.D.

We are aided in learning what was the original Hebrew text by the Samaritan Pentateuch, an independent text that comes down from the days of Manasseh, 698 B.C.; by the Jewish Targums, or interpretations of the original Hebrew composed at a time when Hebrew had ceased to be spoken by the Jews, Aramaic taking its place; and by various translations of the Old Testament into other languages.

The oldest of these versions is the Greek translation, which was the Bible used in New Testament times. It is called the Septuagint (Greek for "seventy") from the tradition that seventy (or seventy-two) scholars went into separate cells and came out with seventy exactly similar translations! This Greek Old Testament was made for the Greek-speaking Jews of Egypt, and was begun at Alexandria under Ptolemy Philadelphus, 285-247 B.C. Other valuable ancient versions are the Syriac of the first or second century after

Christ, and Jerome's Latin translation (the Vulgate), made about 400 A.D.

The original manuscripts of the New Testament have probably long ago fallen to dust, for they were written on the poor paper called papyrus, made of the pith of the papyrus reed, the Egyptian bulrush. Early copies were made on vellum (calfskin) or parchment (sheepskin or goatskin). Cheap slave labor multiplied these copies, and the monks of the middle ages made copies with the most pious care. The first printed book was a Latin Bible, produced by Gutenberg in 1456.

The New Testament was written in Greek. The extant manuscripts are far older than those of the Old Testament, and also more numerous. The manuscripts later than about the beginning of the tenth century are cursives (Latin *curro*, to run), being written in a rapid, running hand then adopted by the monks. The more ancient and more valuable manuscripts are called uncials, from the Latin *uncia*, an inch, because they are written in capital letters that are sometimes an inch long. The words were written with no spaces between, and there were no verse or chapter divisions.

The most ancient and valuable uncials are three. The Aleph or Sinaitic manuscript was discovered by Tischendorf in the convent of St. Catharine on Mount Sinai, the monks being about to kindle fires with it. It is the only complete uncial manuscript of the New Testament, and is preserved in St. Petersburg. It was written about 340 A.D. The A or Alexandrine manuscript came from Egypt and is preserved in the British Museum. It was written before the middle of the fifth century. The B or Vatican manuscript is preserved carefully by the Catholic authorities

at Rome, and is of the same great age as the Sinaitic manuscript.

Very recently there have been found in Egypt some scraps of papyrus containing "logia," or sayings of Jesus, and these fragments are the most ancient Christian manuscripts we possess, being written 140 A.D. or even earlier. There was also discovered recently "The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles," a summary of Christian doctrine written about 75 A.D., the manuscript being made in 1056 A.D..

Of much value in determining the exact text of the New Testament are the oldest translations from the Greek, made into old Latin in the second century, into later Latin by Jerome in the fourth century (the Vulgate or "common" version still used by the Roman Catholics), into Syrian about 200 A.D., into Ethiopic in the fourth century (for use in Abyssinia), into Coptic (for Egypt), Gothic, Arabic, Persian.

Still other evidence for the ancient text as well as conclusive proof of the authenticity of the New Testament is found in the frequent quotations from the New Testament writers made by the Christian authors of early times, such as Polycarp (a disciple of St. John), Justin Martyr (born about 100 A.D.), Clement (born about 160 A.D.), and Irenæus (a disciple of Polycarp, 120-202 A.D.).

The canon of the Old Testament, or list of books having a right there, was fixed in its essentials by Ezra and his associates. The canon of the New Testament was authoritatively settled by the Council of Carthage, 397 A.D. Ancient Hebrew and Greek writings connected with the Bible in theme but evidently spurious and uninspired are placed in the Apocrypha.

If we except the poetical version of

Cædmon and the prose translation of a portion of the Bible made by Bede, John Wyclif is the first translator of the Bible into English. His translation was made from Jerome's Latin translation and so was inaccurate, but it was a very noble work of a very heroic man. It was finished by the middle of 1382, and was of course reproduced in manuscripts, printing not having been invented.

William Tyndale's New Testament (1525) and Pentateuch (1530) were the first printed English translations. This noble scholar, a martyr to the cause of Bible translation, made use of the original Hebrew and Greek, and his work lies at the bottom of our present English Bible. The first complete English Bible was the translation made by Miles Coverdale, one of Tyndale's friends, and published in 1535. On the request of Thomas Cromwell, the famous officer of Henry VIII., Coverdale published in 1539 "the Great Bible," so called because it was a large folio. The version of the Psalms in this translation is still used in the English Prayer Book.

A very valuable translation, the Geneva Bible, was published in 1560 by the Puritan exiles in Geneva, Switzerland. Verse divisions were used in this Bible. This Bible became so popular that the English Church revised the Great Bible, the result being "the Bishops' Bible"; and the confusing simultaneous use of all three versions caused the preparation, under James I., of the Authorized Version or King James Bible of 1611. This great work, the fountain head of our modern civilization, was accomplished by forty-seven translators, each of whom took a portion of the Bible, the whole being completed in two and three-fourths years. In the meantime, in 1610, the Roman Catholic translation of

Jerome's Latin translation was completed. It is still in use, and is called the Douai Bible, from the place in Flanders where it was finished.

For more than two and a half centuries the King James Bible was the supreme translation; but during that long time the most ancient manuscripts, the uncials, were discovered, many errors were found in the King James version, and many changes took place in the English language itself, all of which rendered a new translation necessary. The Church of England took the lead, forming two companies of the ablest scholars of all denominations, one for the Old Testament and one for the New, with corresponding American companies working in close coöperation. These labored with self-denying zeal for ten and a half years, and published in 1881 the Revised New Testament, and, in four years more, the Revised Old Testament. This is the English or Victorian Revision.

The American revisers waited till 1901 according to agreement, and then published the American Standard (the version given in this volume), in which they incorporated their own preferences that had not been adopted in the Victorian Revision, together with many other improvements upon that version. The American Standard is certainly the most accurate of all the Bible translations, and brings out most faithfully in English the words and thoughts of the inspired originals. This is what every Bible reader should desire.

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## The Bible in Course

When a surveyor has a large piece of ground to survey, especially if it is irregular and wooded, he makes

what he calls a reconnoissance: he travels over the boundaries with a pocket compass, noting the directions and counting his steps. Roughly plotting the results, he has on paper his preliminary sketch of the finished survey.

Reading the Bible straight through is our reconnoissance of the sacred volume. There is much we shall not understand, but those parts we shall hurry over for the present; we shall get enough that we do understand. We shall realize the massiveness and splendor of the Book. We shall get a rough idea of the relation of its parts. We shall form some conception of its contents, and probably get an introduction to many books and portions of books. I well remember how my own first reading of the Bible straight through introduced me to Job, Deuteronomy, Ezekiel, and Jeremiah, which have since been favorite books. Every Christian should make this Bible reconnoissance at least once.

From fifteen minutes to half an hour a day for a year will accomplish this wise purpose. You will be far more likely to stick to your design if you have a regular time and place for the reading. Three or four chapters a day will suffice on the average, though you should apportion to each day enough pages to serve as its full share. Of course some parts, such as the genealogical tables in Numbers, may be read very rapidly for your present purpose. If any one cares for a detailed guide, it may be found in my little book, "A Bible Year," which contains introductions to the different books, assignments of chapters for each day, an appropriate theme for each day's meditation, and suggestions for each day's further study, if the reader has the time.

The version used should by all means be the American Standard;



you will not want to spend so much time on anything but the best translation.

It will give zest to your reading if, in addition to the general purpose of reconnaissance, you take a specific object, as, to look for revelations of the character of God, or for helps in temptation or inspiration for courage. Mark all you find that bears on this topic. Another time you will wish to read the Bible straight through, using a different specific object and a different color for your markings.

Each day you should review what you have read, getting a clear idea of its general contents or thought. Do this also the second day. Try for permanent gains.

Look at the large purpose of each book. You cannot stay for lesser points, but you can make sure of that.

It will be an inspiration if you can get others to read the Bible straight through at the same time you do. Talking over the readings will be a spur to you all. If those that are doing it are members of your Sunday-school class, you will often get points bearing directly and helpfully on the current lessons.

And especially, as you read the Bible straight through, note what books you want to study more thoroughly, and write a list of them in the back of the book. That is your Bible prospectus for coming years.

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### Bible Study Book by Book

Christians are well aware that the Bible is, in a sense, not one book but an entire literature, the literature of the Hebrew people. In the highest sense, however, it is a single book, one-purposed and harmonious in all its parts. This is what makes Hebrew literature unique among all the

literatures of the world, and this constitutes one of the strongest arguments for its supernatural origin.

In spite of these considerations, the study of the Bible book by book is one of the most valuable methods of Bible study. To become a specialist in any one book of the Bible, such as Ephesians, Amos, Isaiah, Genesis, John, is a noble ambition. There is enough in any book of the Bible to occupy the life of a great scholar, and how much more of us little scholars!

Book-by-book study of the Bible should not follow the order of the Bible books, but the order of your own interest. Begin with the book to which you are most attracted, whatever that may be, and reach out from it to similar or related books. If, for example, you are led to study the Psalms first, after obtaining a fair knowledge of that great book you will want to gain fresh light upon it by a study of the other poetical books of the Bible, Job, Proverbs, Lamentations, Solomon's Song, and the poems included in other books. For the related history you will be led to Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles. No Bible book stands alone.

Thus in the Sunday-school work you will read all the Bible books that are closely related to the special book in which the lessons lie. If you are studying the Acts, you will read the Epistles. If you are studying Matthew, you will bring the other Gospels alongside. And you will introduce in the class discussions the points you obtain from this wider reading.

In studying a single book of the Bible it is best to obtain, in addition to whatever general commentaries you may possess, some special monograph upon the book. Helpful monographs upon most of the Bible books are to be found in English, such as Perowne and Spurgeon and Barton

on the Psalms, Peloubet and Genung on Job, Mitchell on Amos, Deems on James, Milligan on Revelation, Swete on Mark, Genung on Ecclesiastes, and so on almost without end. Many of the great commentaries assign separate books to specialists, such as George Adam Smith's famous work on the minor prophets in "The Expositor's Bible." These are unequal, and the student will need to discriminate among them, using what is best in each series.

The book you are studying should first be read with care, but as rapidly as may be, without having recourse to any commentary. Mark with question marks what you do not understand, and then you will have an appetite for the information given by the commentary, and will be far more likely to remember it. This preliminary reading may well be repeated more than once before you turn to the commentary. It is well also to make your own outline and analysis of the book before you read the analysis of the commentary. Compare yours with it, and make corrections and improvements from it. Take pains to master the introduction to the book given in the commentary before passing to the chapter and verse comments.

Let your study of a Bible book ever have in view a double purpose: to discover what the book meant to the times for which it was immediately written, and what it means for the times in which you live. Ask at each turn of the thought: "How did this influence the lives of the first readers or hearers? How should this influence my life?"

Review the book, over and over, till you feel that it has become a permanent addition to your mind. Make your knowledge so substantial that it will serve as a firm nucleus about

which later accretions of knowledge may gather. When such a nucleus is once formed, you will be surprised to see how many additions will be made to it.

### Studying the Bible by Topics

Our use of the Bible is mainly a topical use. For instance, we want to know not so much what James says about the answers to prayer as the Bible teaching on that great theme. No one can wisely, or with satisfaction to himself, stop short of the entire Bible view on any important question. Moreover, it is a profound satisfaction to make sure that one has mastered what the Bible has to say on any subject; one has the feeling of definite and worthy accomplishment.

It is a fine thing to become a Bible specialist, to learn all one can, and far more than most others know, about any one phase of the Bible and its teachings. We may take up a vast theme, such as prophecy, or a small matter, such as the Jewish months, according to our ability and tastes; but to be a specialist in anything relating to the Bible is well worth while. We shall need to learn all that the Bible has to say on the subject, and add whatever we can get outside.

In the section on Bible marking I have given a convenient and fairly full list of topics for this topical study of the Bible. Begin with the subject in which you take a natural and unforced interest, whether it is in that list or not, and then branch out from that into related themes as your interest leads you. You will find the pathway endless, and as delightful as it is long.

You will be wise if you let your Sunday-school lessons lead you out

into topical study of the Bible. For example, you have in the school the story of Gideon; make a topical study of the inspiring theme, the Bible victories of few over many. You will group together the exploits of Jonathan, Samson, Shamgar, David, and many other heroes, and you will add such verses as 1 Sam 14:6 and Josh. 23:10, which you will commit to memory. Before you are through you will have made many positive gains, for illustration and personal inspiration.

At another time your topical study may well seek to throw light on an entire series of lessons. For example, if the school is with Paul on his travels, you may make a topical study of Pauline geography, seeing how much you can learn about Antioch, and Ephesus, and Athens, and Rome, in connection with the Bible.

Topical study is especially valuable when you combine biographical and historical illustrations with those that are more abstract. If, for instance, you become interested in learning what the Bible has to say on the relation of parents and children, do not stop with positive precepts, such as those found so abundantly in Proverbs, but add the even greater illumination of actual examples, such as Christ, Timothy, Samuel, Eli, Ruth, Absalom, Isaac, Joseph, Jephthah's daughter.

As your interest in this topical study grows, you will become keen to increase your number of passages bearing on a subject, and you will be glad to enlist others in the pursuit with you. Thus topical study may be taken up helpfully by a whole class in cooperation. It is a good plan to let the topical study of one great theme, such as the atonement, run as an undercurrent through an entire quarter of the year, or even longer.

For this work a complete concordance is indispensable (Walker's is the best for ordinary use). A Bible index, found in teachers' Bibles, is helpful. Helpful also are the Bible text-books such as those by Inglis and Torrey. You will soon learn, in your use of the concordance, to look up cognate words; if, for example, you want texts concerning the Bible, you will look under "law," "testimony," "Scriptures," etc. No topical study is complete without the instructive search through the Bible book by book. Some books you can reject at once from your consideration as certain to contain nothing bearing on the point; others will at once bring to mind appropriate passages; still others must be examined very closely.

It is in this broad view of the Bible that the value of topical study consists. You gain a knowledge of the relation of part to part, and you get away from the consideration of isolated texts. You obtain that priceless possession, a whole Bible.

### Bible Marking

A marked Bible is twice a Bible. The process has made the Bible familiar to its owner, and accessible. With no outside help, he can trace a doctrine through its pages, and note the progress of thought and action from age to age and book to book. Moreover, Bible marking binds your own experience into the blessed volume, filling its blank spaces with a record of your own thought and life; you have put yourself into the Scriptures and got the Scriptures into yourself.

Bible marking gives new zest to the reading and study of the Bible because of the ease and definiteness with which so much of your gains is preserved. It is a task without diffi-



## BIBLE MARKING

culty, done a little at a time, but the aggregation of accomplishment is enormous in the course of years.

When the present writer was a Sunday-school librarian a lady came to him with the request: "Won't you please, when you read one of the library books, mark the passages that interest you most? Marked books are so much more interesting to me." Your own Bible, if you mark it thoughtfully, will become far more interesting and precious to you and to those that may receive the book after you.

A very simple plan is the best for Bible marking. It will mean much to you if, as you read the Bible, you underscore only the verses that are the most helpful, or merely draw a vertical line against them in the margin. My own method is only a little more complex than that, and I have found it entirely adequate.

In my personal Bible I have taken the fifty-two topics on which the Scriptures have the most to say, and designated each with a symbol consisting of one or two natural and readily remembered letters, thus:

A = Anger.	Hu = Humility.
B = Bible.	I = Immortality.
Cf = Confession.	J = Judgment.
Ch = Church.	Jy = Joy.
Cm = Communion.	L = Love.
Cn = Conscience.	La = Labor.
Cr = Courage.	M = Missions.
Ct = Contentment.	O = Obedience.
Cv = Covetousness.	P = Prayer.
Cy = Charity.	Pa = Patience.
D = Death.	Pc = Peace.
F = Faith.	Pe = Perseverance.
Fg = Forgiveness.	Pr = Purity.
G = God.	Pt = Patriotism.
H = Heaven.	Pv = Providence.
Hl = Holiness.	R = Repentance.
Hp = Hope.	S = Salvation.
HS = Holy Spirit.	Sb = Sabbath.

Sd = Self-denial.	Λ (an inverted V)
Sl = Selfishness.	= Conversion.
Sn = Sin.	W = Worship.
So = Sorrow.	Wr = Worldliness.
Sp = Speech.	Ws = Wisdom.
Sr = Service.	Wt = Watchful-
T = Thanksgiving.	ness.
Tm = Temperance.	X (the first letter
Tr = Truth.	of His Greek
Tt = Temptation.	name) = Christ.

This list is placed in the back of the book, but of course it is soon committed to memory. In my own use of the method I subdivide each topic into seven numbered subtopics: thus "atonement" is X 7 and "country" is Pt 1. The entire system, with a collection of texts for each topic and subtopic, is fully set forth in my little book, "The Bible Marksman." Every Bible user, however, will doubtless prefer to make his own set of symbols according to his own needs and likings.

All that is essential is, while reading the Bible, to mark the appropriate symbol in the outer margin against each verse that especially strikes your attention. I have a way of linking the verses on a particular topic by writing below each symbol, in very fine figures, the page where the next verse on that topic is to be found (having numbered all the pages consecutively). This is useful for study and for giving Bible readings, but is not a necessary addition to the plan.

This method, or any better method that may be discovered, will be set forth in the adult class, and occasional exercises in Bible marking may be given in the class. The theme chosen should be intimately related to the lesson, and the exercise may be led by the teacher or by some pupil that has made special preparation.

The students, as they become en-

thusiastic, will wish to enlarge their collections of texts by copying from other collections, or by the use of such collections as are given in my "Bible Marksman," Inglis's admirable "Bible Text Cyclopaedia," and similar books.

This is Bible marking by topics. The student will soon come to supplement it with a system of cross references for the purpose of historical comparison. Opposite Acts 8:40, for instance, you will place "Acts 21:8"—the next reference to Philip in the New Testament. Such references, to be sure, are given in reference Bibles, but in so great numbers as to be confusing. Each one that you thus write out will have real meaning to you.

Gradually you will enlarge your Bible marking until your Bible has become the repository of much of the results of your study. Dates will be inserted, the modern equivalents of weights and measures, condensed facts and explanations, comments and illustrations. These accumulations cannot be predicted or formulated for you. Be keen to incorporate in your Bible whatever will shed light upon the sacred pages, and you will be amazed at the value of what you will thus store up.

These Bible markings will be useful in your private reading and study, in your work of Bible memorizing, and in the class discussions. You will be able to illustrate Scripture with Scripture, making the Bible its own best interpreter.

Whenever you can, use ink for your Bible marking, or at least an ink pencil. Colored pencils are useful, for they enable you to distinguish with readily seen colors the great topics in which you are most interested.

Finally, mark nothing merely for the sake of Bible marking, but only

as the passage means something to you in your heart life, or as you have a definite use for it in the future. Let nothing cumber these precious Bible margins, but pack them full of significance.

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### Committing the Bible to Memory

The true soldier will carry his weapon always by his side, to guard against a sudden attack of the enemy. The wise physician will have his medicine bag with him at all times, ready for an instant's call upon his skill. The traveller in an unknown region will take food with him on his journey, and will not reckon on meeting an inn always when he is hungry.

The Bible is the Christian's weapon and medicine and food, but too few Christians carry it with them, stored up in their memories. It is on their study table, but they cannot get at it in time of sudden trial, in chance conversations with unbelievers, during a long, distressful night. Few of us have much of the Bible in the place where it is most needed, namely, in our heads and our hearts. The Bible *by heart*—that is a suggestive synonym for committing to memory.

In former years there was far more committing of the Bible to memory than there is now. Books and papers have so multiplied, copies of the Bible are so readily at hand, that we have the impression that we can have the Book always with us without storing it away in our minds; but we cannot.

Why may not the adult Sunday-school classes of the land take the lead in restoring this good old custom of committing the Bible to memory? If the parents get the habit they will perceive its immense advantages, and



## COMMITTING THE BIBLE TO MEMORY

will soon instruct their children in it. Why not set apart a regular time in each recitation period for the repeating of Bible verses and longer passages? Those portions should be taken that are appropriate to the lesson, and in no way could we better illustrate and enforce the lesson truths. The exercise may be abundantly varied, as I shall show. The members of the class will like it from the start, and as their memories grow in power they will like it more and more.

If you take up this work, it will be best to decide at the beginning of the quarter upon a course of memory passages for the entire three months. You may appoint a memory committee, which you may prefer to dignify by the title, "Mnemosyne Committee." This committee will not only select the Bible passages to be learned by heart and give a list of references and dates to each member of the class, but it may conduct the memory exercise in connection with each recitation, if the teacher wishes this aid.

If you do not care to work in this elaborate way, simply establish the custom of calling for Bible comments on the lesson at the close of each recitation. Let it be understood that no verses are to be read, but all are to be repeated from memory. Urge the students always to learn with each verse the chapter and verse numbers, and repeat them with the verse. The many advantages of this custom will soon be apparent, not the least of which is the ease with which those that will become enthusiastic in the method can add to their repertoire by noting the verses given by their comrades. In addition, this custom of giving the chapter and verse allows one always to look up readily the context of the

text, which is often as illuminating as the text itself.

Another useful method is to confine the memory passages to the Bible book you are studying, having the members of the class repeat at each recitation the most helpful verses they find as they go on in the study of the book.

Still another admirable plan is to memorize Bible verses according to certain few topics, carefully selected as the lessons may suggest them. These topics should be those of the greatest practical value. For several weeks you may memorize verses that teach the nearness of God, His omnipresence. At other times you may store your memory with Bible words helpful in time of temptation, or of sorrow, or of sickness, or of loss or failure. Again, you may learn the chief Bible passages teaching immortality, or the inspiration of the Bible, or the divinity of Christ—such passages as you can use in talking with doubters.

It is very helpful to form chains of verses on a single topic, associating the verses together by some natural or artificial link. The verses may be committed to memory in the order of the books from which they are taken: Or, they may be linked together in alphabetical order, arranging them so that the first significant words of the verses shall begin with the successive letters of the alphabet. Another way of linking the verses alphabetically is by their subjects, such as a series of verses answering to the themes: "*Prayer answered, prayer blessed, prayer constant, prayer denied, prayer ecstatic, prayer faithful,*" etc. Many other methods will be devised by the ingenious of the class, and they should be encouraged to communicate their inventions to their comrades.

A contest in repeating Bible verses

would make an interesting exercise at a class social. Sides should be chosen, an umpire should be appointed, and the effort will be to see which side can repeat the largest number of verses correctly. Correct quotation of the Bible is rare, and pains should be taken in all this work to get absolute accuracy.

In committing to memory do not use the King James version, but the American Standard revision. What you want in your mind is the real Bible, is it not? and you do not want to perpetuate errors of translation.

If you want success in this Bible memorizing, it is positively necessary for you to review frequently. Without constant review all your gains will slip away from you.

The best review is use. Introduce the blessed passages into your conversation and your talks in the prayer meetings. Make full use of them in the Sunday-school discussions. Meditate upon them in the night watches.

You will find, as you continue in this practice of Bible memorizing, that it adds a new incentive to the reading of the Scriptures. You will be eager to increase your accumulations of sacred lore, and you will rejoice in ever new additions of knowledge and wisdom and comfort.

## The Literary Study of the Bible

The Holy Spirit, inspiring the writers of the Bible, made use of necessity of literary forms, and it is a glorious study to see how all the modes of human expression are incorporated in the Book of books. The Bible is the literature of a race as well as the message of God to all the world. The Bible as literature is best

studied with the aid of Professor Moulton's "The Literary Study of the Bible."

You will find the Bible full of poems, written not in rhyme but in balanced clauses arranged in couplets (see Job almost anywhere), triplets (Lam. 1, 2), quatrains (Ps. 121), and sometimes in longer groups (Prov. 30: 4). You will often find the refrain introduced (Ps. 107, 136), and you will often find the long, swaying, carefully balanced stanzas called strophes, as in a Greek chorus (see Ps. 107). The poems range from simple songs, like "The Song of the Sword" (Gen. 4: 23, 24), to odes (the noble Song of Deborah, Judg. 5), elegies (the Lamentations of Jeremiah), and idyls (Solomon's Song). The Bible also contains epics, but they are prose historical passages treated in the grand epic fashion, like the story of Balaam with its bursts of poetry. The nearest approach to a drama in the Bible is the book of Job, but there are many dramatic passages in the prose portions of the Book.

The Bible contains all kinds of prose. There are constitutional histories (Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers), ecclesiastical histories (Chronicles, Acts), and national histories (Joshua, Judges, Kings, etc.). Bible histories are models of clearness, simplicity, and power.

The world's greatest biographical writings are in the Bible. Preëminent among these are the Gospel lives of our Lord, and the Old Testament lives of Abraham, Joseph, and David. A company of Boston authors once voted on the most perfect short story in all literature, and when the ballots were opened it was found that all had voted for the story of Joseph.

The orations included in the Bible are of the widest scope, ranging from

the masterpieces in Deuteronomy to the perfect pearls of discourse found in Christ's parables and the condensed argument of Paul's oration on Mars' Hill. The greatest letters in the world are embodied in the Bible. Some are friendly personal letters, like Paul's to Philemon, some are letters to churches or entire peoples (Hebrews and Romans), and some are elaborate treatises like Cicero's Epistles (the Epistle to the Romans).

Philosophical writings are numerous in the Bible. They range from light riddles like Samson's and proverbs or maxims and epigrams to longer essays like Jas. 3:1-12 or the essays that make up the book of Ecclesiastes.

Finally, the highest form of writing in the Bible, and the form most characteristic of the Hebrew literature, is prophecy. It is the highest form because it combines in a wonderful fashion the chief excellencies of all other forms of both prose and verse and unites them with an impassioned power that has always produced mighty effects upon the souls of men. You will find in the prophecies lyrics and odes, epistles and histories, parables and allegories, dialogues and dramatic monologues and orations, proverbs and essays and sermons. A student of literature could find no more inspiring subject than a study of the Old Testament prophets.

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### How the Bible May Influence Your Heart Life

The Bible may be studied as literature, or as history, or as embodying theological doctrines, or for purposes of criticism and argumentation. All of these objects of study may con-

tribute to the heart life or they may not. Certainly we must read with the understanding if we would read with the spirit, and the better we understand the Bible the more help we shall gain from it; but there is no necessary connection between the literary study of the Bible and a strong Bible influence in your life.

To gain this influence you must, in the first place, read the Bible with your personal problems ever before you. You are worried? You will have your favorite passages of peace to which to turn, or you will take up some strong book and explore it for new passages helpful in such circumstances.

In the second place, when you have found your bit of help—it may be only a single verse—stop right there and meditate on it. Apply it to yourself, asking yourself such questions as these: "How is this an example for me? Do I keep this precept? If not, why not? If so, do I keep it perfectly? How can I improve my observance of this commandment? Have I realized this promise? Have I observed the conditions?"

In the third place, you must read persistently. Wrestle with your Bible as Jacob wrestled with the angel, and say, "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me." The blessing is there for you, as it has been there for others. Read often and long, until you find it. And remember that one Bible passage made thoroughly your own is better than a thousand that you have read hastily and not appropriated.

In the fourth place, you must read in the spirit of prayer. In answer to prayer God sends revelations of truth that will not come to you in any other way. Confidently expect those revelations in answer to your earnest



petitions, and you will not be disappointed.

Finally, you must obey what you read. When a truth for your life is flashed upon your mind, flash it into a deed. Make haste to obey. Provide the conditions in which the promises can be fulfilled. Test God's Word in an obedient life.

It is useful to set yourself some Bible stint for each day or series of days, just as Franklin set himself stints of moral excellence which, bit by bit, he would attain. To-day, for instance, your Bible reading points out patience as a needed virtue, and your conscience adds its confirmation. Try to-day to carry out the Bible injunction you have fallen upon, and to-morrow add other passages to it, and so continue specializing on patience until you realize it. Then go on to another virtue or grace.

It is useful also occasionally to give yourself a sort of general Bible examination. Ask yourself, "How do I stand with the Book?" To answer that question is more important than for any merchant by a trial balance to discover how he stands with his account books. Take one of the great testing passages, such as the twelfth chapter of Romans, and hold your life up against it, point by point. Be faithful, as the Book is faithful, and day by day you will make progress in the Christian life.

## Helps for Bible Study

In all our Bible study the Bible itself is the main text-book, ever to be kept in front of us and used as the chief source of information and inspiration. Recent years, however, have enormously multiplied the number of useful Bible helps, all of which, if used, will add much to the value and

pleasure of your study, while some are absolutely indispensable.

First a word about the copy of the Bible that you will use. You will really need several copies. One should have wide margins and be printed on paper that will take ink, so that you can make marginal notes. You must make the best and most recent translations your dependence, but you will need also the King James version for reference.

If you read any other language, often read the Bible in that tongue, and it will come to you with many fresh meanings. You will also get much of suggestiveness from the various translations into modern forms of expression, and especially from Moulton's arrangements of the sacred text.

Whether you read Greek or not, you will find Vincent's "Word Studies in the New Testament" and "The Expositor's Greek Testament" exceedingly valuable.

Some commentary is absolutely necessary. Dummelow's is the best and most recent one-volume commentary, and is indeed admirable. Of commentaries in series the Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges is still unexcelled, though the New Century Bible is a close rival, and is more recent and compact. The gaps in the Cambridge Bible are well filled by the "Handbooks for Bible Classes," edited by Dods and Whyte.

Of the older commentaries Ellicott's is perhaps the most generally useful, though the Speaker's and the Pulpit Commentary each has its excellencies. Parker's People's Bible, Dr. Alexander Maclaren's "Expositions of Holy Scripture," and the various volumes of the Expositor's Bible are full of meat. The International Critical Commentary is able, but generally too radical. The volumes of

the Westminster Commentary thus far published are unexcelled, and it bids fair to be the best of all the commentaries.

You cannot get along without a Bible dictionary. Of those in one volume, Davis's is safe, conservative, scholarly, and altogether useful. So is Peloubet's revision of Smith's. The "Standard Bible Dictionary," the one-volume dictionary by Hastings, and "The Illustrated Bible Dictionary" by Piercy are all recent and valuable. There are two great Bible dictionaries of recent years, Hastings's in five volumes and the "Encyclopædia Biblica" in four. The latter is an exposition of the most radical criticism; the former is far more conservative in most of its articles.

A concordance is indispensable, and those in the teachers' Bibles are necessarily so small as to be practically useless. Walker's Concordance has superseded the old Cruden's. Young's Concordance is for those who wish to trace words in the Greek and Hebrew.

You must also have a Bible atlas, and excellent ones are found in many Bibles. Place with the atlas Smith's invaluable "Historical Geography of the Holy Land," and some of the many fine volumes of travel in Palestine.

For grouping texts I find Inglis's "Bible-Text Cyclopædia" invaluable. Torrey's is also a good one. On explorations in Bible lands Price's "The Monuments and the Old Testament" is the best. For Bible history the great works by Geikie, Stanley, and Milman are eloquent, instructive, and inspiring in the highest degree.

There are several delightful series of biographies of Bible characters with which all Bible students should be acquainted. The best are by

Meyer, Whyte, Taylor, and Matheson, and the series of "Men of the Bible" and "Temple Bible Characters." Of lives of Paul the best are by Conybeare and Howson, Farrar, Stalker, and Baring-Gould. Add the noble works of Ramsay. The leading lives of Christ are by Farrar, Geikie, Stalker, Watson, Matheson, Andrews, Beecher, Mrs. Phelps-Ward, and Barton.

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### How to Study the Historical Books of the Old Testament

The best way to study the historical books of the Old Testament is to study them in the historical order, as they are printed in the Bible and studied in our Sunday-schools. At the same time the narrative portions of the prophets should be introduced in the places where they belong in the history.

While reading any historical book of the Old Testament, use as a bookmark a long strip of cardboard divided into decades or centuries or even years, and covering the time of the book you are reading, together with a large margin before and after. Use the best chronological table you can find, in the Bible dictionary, teachers' Bible, or lesson help, and as you read about any event insert a note of it, in one or two words, at the proper date. Add the kings at the beginning and end of their reigns, and the other prominent men at the times of their first and last mention.

A knowledge of the geography being essential for the understanding, obtain or draw an unlettered map of the region involved in the book you are studying, mount it on wood, and insert large pins in the places made famous by each character of the narrative. These pins should bear

tiny streamers (made of paper), bearing the names of the characters, or contractions of those names. For example, pins bearing an "E" for "Elijah" may be placed at Tishbeh, Gilead, Samaria, the Cherith, Zarephath, Jezreel, Mount Carmel, etc. For battles, use red-headed pins; for deaths, black-headed ones. Pins of distinctive color or size may be used to designate different persons, thus obviating the necessity for the paper streamers. The pins should often be removed and again inserted by way of review. It is best not to print the names of places, but to name them to yourself as you insert each pin.

One of the most valuable exercises, as you study these historical books, is to compare character with character. Thus Asa should be linked with Jehoshaphat, Joash, Hezekiah, and Josiah, and comparisons made. Thus Elijah and Elisha should be compared and contrasted; Moses, Samuel, and David; Jeremiah and Ezekiel, etc.

After the same fashion events of a similar nature should be linked together in your mind. When studying about an escape, compare it with all other accounts of Bible escapes you have studied; thus also with Bible punishments, the instances of God's forgiveness, and so on. This exercise is valuable for your mental growth, and exceedingly useful for Sunday-school class illustrations. For both purposes, try all the time to increase your repertoire of such comparisons.

Frequent reviews are necessary to the understanding and retention of history. Fix an outline of the events in your mind as you proceed, and go over it at odd times when away from the Book.

In no kind of reading is a wise use of the imagination more helpful than

in historical reading. This is especially true of history so condensed as the Old Testament history is. Try at each turn to put yourself in the places of the characters, fancying what they felt, thought, said, and did that is not recorded. Do this for the subordinate characters as well as the main ones. For instance, in reading about the passage of the Red Sea, think of what Moses may have said to Joshua as they came up to the place. Imagine the feelings of some distracted mother. Fancy Caleb comforting and encouraging her. Fancy an Egyptian country boy peeping at the scene from behind a rock of the mountain yonder.

As you read the Old Testament histories realize that you are reading the very best English narratives, and try to appreciate the magnificent literary style. Note the songs, orations, letters, dialogues, and the other literary forms as they are introduced. For this literary study nothing is better than the arrangements in Moulton's "Modern Reader's Bible."

Above all, as you study these historical books seek to grasp the main purpose of God in regard to His people, and follow the unfolding of that purpose through the centuries. See how surely this end was carried out in spite of the evils in the nation, and how certainly it all moved forward toward the culmination in the life of Christ. This consideration will give dramatic and glorious interest to all your studies.

Now an introductory word concerning each of these historical books. The first five books of the Bible are called the Pentateuch, which means "five books." If Joshua is added, the collection is called the Hexateuch, or "six books." Hebrews call the Pentateuch "The Book of the Law," or Torah.



## GENESIS.

Genesis (the word means "beginning") is named in Hebrew, as are all the Pentateuch books, from its opening words, "In the beginning." It covers more time than all the rest of the Bible put together. It includes an account of creation, wonderfully substantiated by geology and astronomy; the introduction and fall of man; and the early history of the chosen people, the lives of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph. After the introduction the book is divided into ten sections, each opening with the words, "These are the generations of." The author of the book was Moses; but he probably made use, under God's guidance, of certain documents previously existing.

## EXODUS.

Exodus (the name, like Genesis, comes from the Greek translation, the Septuagint) means "the going out" (from Egypt). Genesis is personal history; Exodus is the beginning of national history. Study, as you read, the establishment of the nation (chapters 1-18), the founding of its laws (chapters 19-24), the beginnings of its worship (chapters 25-40). The book is filled with Egyptian words and ideas and with terms taken from the wilderness journeys, all pointing to its great author, Moses.

## LEVITICUS.

Leviticus (so called because it is a book of directions for the Levites) covers only one month in time and contains only three pieces of narrative. Christ quoted from this book His "second commandment." The laws here recorded relate to sacrifices (chapters 1-7), the consecration of priests (chapters 8-10), purity (chapters 11-16), holiness of life (chapters 17-26), and gifts to God (chapter 27). Though written for

another people, these laws are full of wisdom for us of to-day, and are full also of marvelous implied prophecies of Christ.

## NUMBERS.

Numbers is the story of the thirty-eight years and three months from the giving of the law to the final leaving of the wilderness. Its scenes are at Sinai, at Kadesh, in the wilderness, and opposite Jericho. It is named from the two censuses of the people, at the beginning and the end of the wilderness wanderings. It contains many bits of ancient poetry, such as the "Song of the Well" (21: 17, 18), and it is especially precious to the Christian because of the Messianic episode of the brazen serpent.

## DEUTERONOMY.

The books of the Pentateuch are in chronological order. Deuteronomy consists of three orations by Moses just before his death and the entrance of his people into the promised land. The first address, chapters 1-4: 40, reviews God's goodness to His people. The second address, chapters 5-26, is a restatement of the law, for this second generation. This section gives its name to the book, Deuteronomy meaning "the second law." The third oration, chapters 27-30, is a renewal of the covenant between God and the nation. The close of the book, necessarily written by another than Moses, relates the closing scenes in the life of the great lawgiver and statesman. Christ quoted from this book His "chief commandment," and the three sentences with which He frustrated Satan in His temptation. For magnificent eloquence, and the loftiness and wide sweep of its thoughts, the book is unsurpassed even in the Bible.

## JOSHUA.

The greater part of the book of Joshua was written by the great gen-

eral whose name it bears, with additions by later historians. The book consists of three parts: the conquest of Canaan (chapters 1-12), the settlement of Canaan (chapters 13-22), and Joshua's farewell address and death (chapters 23, 24). The book contains inspiring records of heroism and much interesting geographical and historical information.

### JUDGES.

The book of Judges describes the three centuries following the conquest of Canaan that were the "iron age" of the nation. The Hebrews were ruled by judges, often local, varying greatly in ability and influence. The book relates the deeds of thirteen of these, the most prominent being Deborah, Gideon, Jephthah, and Samson. The Hebrews believed that Samuel wrote the book; in that case, certain portions incorporate earlier writings, and other portions were inserted later. The book is full of graphic stories, each bearing a warning and a lesson for all time.

### RUTH.

The book of Ruth is the story of David's great-grandmother, the noble woman in whose line our Lord was to be born. Ruth lived in the times of the judges, perhaps at the close of the judgeship of Eli or the beginning of that of Samuel; therefore the book stands in the chronological order in the Bible. At the close the genealogy is brought down to the time of David, which may mark the time when the book was written. The story brings in several curious customs which are full of interest. Because so much of the story is at the time of harvest, the Jews read it at Pentecost, the harvest festival.

### SAMUEL.

First and Second Samuel were but one book in the ancient Hebrew Bible. In the Septuagint they are called First and Second of Kingdoms, and our First and Second Kings are called Third and Fourth of Kingdoms. Samuel wrote a book (1 Sam. 10:25), but this could not have been the book, though the first portion may be derived from it. Later portions may have been taken from the histories written by Nathan and Gad (1 Chron. 29:29). First Samuel contains the account of Samuel's judgeship and Saul's troubled reign, and Second Samuel contains the account of David's reign.

### KINGS.

The two books of Kings were only one book in the original Hebrew, but were broken into two by the Greek translation, the Septuagint. They consist of the history of Solomon's reign, the story of the divided kingdoms to the capture of Samaria (running the two accounts parallel, giving first a contemporary event in Israel and then the story of the corresponding time in Judah), and finally the story of Judah till its capture and exile. The author refers to "The Acts of Solomon," and often to two other works, the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah and of Israel, none of which are in existence. The Jews have a tradition that Jeremiah was the compiler of the books, and many resemblances bear out the tradition; but much of the description is so vivid as to indicate the use of accounts written at the time of the events.

### CHRONICLES.

First and Second Chronicles was originally one book. Some think that the author was Ezra, because the closing portion of Second Chron-



icles is the same as the opening portion of the book of Ezra, and also because of similarities in the language. Whoever the writer may have been, he enumerates no fewer than twelve other histories from which he gained his information. Chronicles begins with extensive genealogies, especially of the southern tribes, such as would be needed after the exile, when the land came to be assigned to its hereditary owners and the Temple service to be taken up by those whose hereditary duty it was. Then come the stories of David, Solomon, and the remaining kings of Judah, with very scanty accounts of events in the northern kingdom.

## EZRA.

A portion at least of the book of Ezra, if not all of it, was written by the famous scribe and statesman himself. It consists of an account of the first return from exile under Zerubbabel and of the second return under Ezra, and is largely made up of copies of official documents, some of which in the original are not in Hebrew but in the language of the times, Aramaic.

## NEHEMIAH.

The book of Nehemiah continues the story of the return. Though it was written by Nehemiah, the Jews reckoned it and Ezra as one book, probably because of the close connection of the history. In the Vulgate the two books are called First and Second Esdras.

## ESTHER.

The last historical writing of the Old Testament, the book of Esther, is held in especial honor by the Jews because it relates the great deliverance of the nation that is still celebrated in the feast of Purim. It is

the only book of the Bible that does not mention the Deity, but the main purpose of the book is to display God's providence caring for His chosen people. The author of the book is unknown, though Ezra and Mordecai have been conjectured. The Ahasuerus of the book was Xerxes the Great, and it is supposed that the feast at the opening of the book was preliminary to the disastrous expedition against Greece, while the fact that he consoled himself after his defeat with the pleasures of the harem is in agreement with the story of Esther.

## How to Study the Poetical Books of the Old Testament

The poetical books of the Old Testament are five in number, and are placed together. They constituted the Hebrew books of devotion. Portions of them are in prose, and Ecclesiastes is mainly in prose; but the same phenomenon, reversed, is found among the prophecies.

## JOB.

Job, the first of these books, is a long philosophical poem in dramatic form, discussing the connection between suffering and sin. Job, of whom Ezekiel and St. James speak as a historical person, was a patriarch of the land of Uz, which was probably the northeastern part of Arabia. There have been many conjectures as to the author of the poem and the date of writing, but nothing is certainly known, though the book, if written later than the patriarchal age, depicts that age with marvelous faithfulness.

There is a prose introduction and a prose epilogue. The poem itself is in three parts, each with a threefold

division. Job's three friends speak in order, and Job replies. Then Elihu enters and makes a more convincing argument, heralding the approach of Jehovah in a thunderstorm, before whom Job humbles himself and is accepted by the Lord, being restored to his former prosperity. The language of the poem is Hebrew, with many points of approach to the Arabic.

The student should read the poem several times, becoming familiar with the persons and the argument. He should write a brief outline of the poem, noting its regular divisions. Read the poem carefully for its solutions of the problem of suffering, noting the several answers suggested, and making up your mind as to their consistency with the justice and love of God. It will be interesting to read the poem once in order to make up your mind concerning the date of writing, getting light on this matter by comparisons with the Psalms, Proverbs, Isaiah, and Amos. Finally, read the great book for an appreciation of its literary power, observing its splendid descriptions, its many striking phrases, and its lofty and pure philosophy.

### PSALMS.

In the Hebrew Bible the Psalms are appropriately called "the Praises." The book consists of religious songs written at different times for a thousand years, from Moses to the end of the captivity. We often call the book "the Psalms of David," but the Shepherd King is expressly named as the author of only 73 out of the 150 Psalms; one is ascribed to Moses, two to Solomon, twelve to Asaph (one of David's musicians), eleven to the sons of Korah, and one each to Heman and Ethan. Many musical terms and directions have been preserved in the Psalms, especially in

their titles. Thirteen of the titles name the occasion on which the Psalm was written.

The student should read the Psalms in the first place to note the characteristics of the five books into which they are divided. It is thought that Psalms 3-41, attributed to David, constitute the very earliest collection. In these the prevailing word for God is Jehovah, while in Book II. the prevailing word is Elohim. It is interesting also to read together the Psalms attributed to different authors, and see what characteristics you can note in each set.

In the five books are certain smaller collections, such as the "Songs of Degrees" or "of Ascents" (120-134), used by pilgrims going up to Jerusalem, and the two groups of Hallelujah Psalms (the Hallels), 113-118 and 146-150. These groups should be read together.

Study also together the Messianic Psalms, those quoted in the New Testament as referring to Christ—Psalms 2, 16, 20, 21, 22, 40, 45, 69, 72, 110.

You will find it helpful to give your own titles to the Psalms as you read them, and to group them together according to their themes. For example, note all the Psalms of praise and thanksgiving, and sometimes read them together. At other times read together the Psalms in praise of Zion, in praise of the Bible, in praise of God's creative wonders.

The literary study of the Psalms is fascinating. Hebrew poetry consists largely of what is called parallelism—lines corresponding and balanced, as to sense and form. Sometimes the second line is contrasted with the first, sometimes it supplements it, sometimes it expresses a similar idea; and this arrangement is carried out not only in couplets but

## HOW TO STUDY THE POETICAL BOOKS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

in triplets, quatrains, and in longer and more intricate forms which it is most interesting to study out. Some of the Psalms, notably Psalm 119, are alphabetical acrostics.

A historical study of the Psalms would be valuable, including an attempt to associate certain ones in your mind with certain occasions in the lives of their writers when they might have been written. Many of the Psalms are echoed in modern hymns; many also are closely associated with notable scenes in the lives of great Christians. As you come across these references in your reading, jot them down in the margins of your Bible.

### PROVERBS.

The book of Proverbs is the Hebrew manual of practical wisdom, as the Psalms is the Hebrew manual of devotion. As the Psalms are said to be David's because he was the leading though not the sole author of them, so the Proverbs are said to be Solomon's. The part most certainly written by the wise monarch is chapters 10-22. Chapters 25-29 are also ascribed to Solomon, with the information in the heading that Hezekiah's wise men copied them out. Chapter 30 is ascribed to Agur and 31: 1-9 to King Lemuel, about neither of whom is anything known. Chapter 31: 10-31 is an alphabetic acrostic in praise of the capable woman. Chapters 1-9 are a series of connected poems on wisdom. Most of the proverbs are in couplets, though some are in quatrains or longer groupings. In the proverbs definitely ascribed to Solomon the parallelism is that of opposition, antithetic; in others it is often that of likeness or addition, synonymous.

One useful method of studying the

Proverbs is to read the book by these various collections, seeking to make out their characteristics. Another is to read it for the literary style, noting the couplets, triplets, quatrains, etc., and the kinds of parallelism. Note also where we have poetical essays. A most fruitful mode of studying is by topics, marking in the margin, for instance, all the proverbs on industry, on temperance, on wisdom, on the conduct of children, and so on. Make an especial note of the proverbs likely to be most helpful in modern life.

### ECCLESIASTES.

The Hebrew title of Ecclesiastes is Koheleth, probably meaning "preacher," and so represented in the Greek translation by the word "Ecclesiastes." The book is a profound essay on life and its meaning, generally in prose, but with poetical elements. It was formerly thought that Solomon wrote the book in his old age, to express his sorrow for his worldly life and his repentance. Many scholars now hold that the language, style, and contents of the book point rather to a period after the return from the captivity, Solomon being said to be the author as embodying the ideal of wisdom.

In studying the book, consider which of these theories of authorship seems most probable, and whether the tone of the book harmonizes more with the early days of the monarchy or with the return from exile. Some scholars think that more than one author had a hand in the book. Read it once, then, to observe its consistency and the regularity of its plan. The book includes a number of proverbs, separate or united, which you will note. But the main purpose of your reading will be to make out the chief argument of the book, which is



that all forms of human occupation are vanities, and that therefore prosperity is not an inseparable token of virtue; this life in itself is unworthy both of God and man, and it must have a redeeming future. Thus the book by negatives leads up to Christ.

### THE SONG OF SONGS.

The Song of Songs is the most obscure book of the Bible. It was read on the eighth day of the Passover, being interpreted by the Jews as an allegory of the exodus. The Latin name for the book, *Canticum Canticum*, gives us the title, Canticles. "Song of Songs" probably means that the song is the chief of songs rather than that it is a collection of songs, though one of the theories of the book is that it is a group of songs used, as in a modern Syrian custom, to celebrate a wedding. Some commentators have regarded the book as a drama, the names of the speakers being omitted, as always in ancient manuscripts. Thus considered, there are two interpretations, depending upon whether Solomon the king is supposed to be the shepherd also, or whether the shepherd is the true love of the Shulamite whom she is tempted to forsake by the allurements of Solomon's love and the attractions of his court, but to whom she proves faithful at last. The theory of the Jews, that the book is an allegory of Jehovah's love for His people, has become among the Christians a theory that the book represents Christ's love for His church. In studying the poem try to make up your mind as to which of these conflicting views is the correct one. As you read, mark the various speakers in the margin, using Moulton as a guide, and read chiefly to appreciate the beauty of the exquisite descriptions.

## How to Study the Prophetical Books of the Old Testament

The prophets should be studied in chronological order. An order likely to be accepted by most conservative scholars is the following (by Professor Davis): during the Assyrian period, 745-625 B.C., in the north: Hosea, Amos, Jonah; in Judah: Joel, Obadiah, Isaiah, Micah, Nahum; during the Babylonian period, 625-587 B.C., in Judah: Jeremiah, Habakkuk, Zephaniah; during the exile in Babylonia: Ezekiel, Daniel; during the period of the restoration: Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi.

When studying any prophet, the pupil should read in Kings and Chronicles the history of the period to which he belongs, and read it in full. Conversely, if the course of Sunday-school lessons lies in Kings or Chronicles, the pupils should read and study the prophets of the times. In adult classes, that are likely to be quite familiar already with the history, chief attention may be paid to this study of the prophets.

The student of the prophets should read first a chapter or a brief book entirely through without having recourse to a commentary, seeing what he can make out of it unaided; but we need help here more than anywhere else in the Bible, just as our American political orations will need especial aid from commentaries two thousand years hence.

It is well to make one's own outline of a book as the reading proceeds, and to incorporate it in one's Bible by furnishing one's own chapter headings. Also, place dates in the margins, and cross references to the contemporary passages in Kings and Chronicles.

In studying a prophet seek to discover what was his main purpose for

## HOW TO STUDY THE PROPHETICAL BOOKS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

his people. Remember that each prophet was a statesman, with an aim as immediate as that of Gladstone or of Lincoln. Find what it was.

Compare prophet with prophet as to style and message, as Jeremiah with Ezekiel and Isaiah, or Haggai with Zechariah.

Observe the relation of each prophet to Christ, noting the gradual growth of the Messianic hope and expectation.

Study the New Testament quotations of each prophet, in some cases numerous. Note the New Testament circumstances under which each quotation is used, and the backward bearing on the significance of the words in the Old Testament, and the meaning of prophecy in the world's history.

With Professor Moulton as your guide, study the literary form of the prophets. Their writings are often poems, and should be printed as such. Always they are magnificent literature, worth studying if only for their glowing rhetoric, their splendid figures of speech, and the masterful power of the composition.

Strive to realize the personality of the prophet you are studying. Bring together all the biographical references, and use your imagination upon these and upon his writings to get as vivid an idea as possible of the sort of man he was.

Finally, read each prophet in terms of to-day. Every one of these heroic men has a message for our decade as real and vital as for his own. The rich and luxurious of to-day need the stern words of Amos as much as the nobles of Israel. Habakkuk's rebuke of the saloon-keeper and the oppressor of the poor read as if written yesterday. Few indeed are the churches where Malachi's exhortation to generous giving would not be in point. It is well, in reading the

prophets, to mark in some especial way in the margin these passages that are particularly applicable to our own times.

And now I will give brief introductions to the prophetic books, taking not the chronological order but the order in which they are printed in our Bibles.

### ISAIAH.

Isaiah prophesied in Judah during the four reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, times of spiritual decline within the nation and terrible peril from without. In spite of the darkness of the times, Isaiah was full of hope, and he is called "the evangelical prophet" because he foretold so nobly the better days that were to come. By common consent, his book is the supreme prophecy of the Bible and so of all time. Its chapters are thus grouped: 1-6, Israel's sins; 7-12, "the book of Immanuel"; 13-23, prophecies against the nations; 24-35, the coming overthrow of evil; 36-39, Hezekiah's triumph; 40-48, God and idols; 49-58, the coming Messiah; 59-66, a new heaven and a new earth. Those scholars that believe in a second Isaiah assign to him the last twenty-seven chapters of the book. It will be of interest, in studying these two portions of Isaiah, to note any points of unlikeness, and also the many strong points of literary similarity.

### JEREMIAH.

Jeremiah, often called "the weeping prophet," is rather the prophet of stern warnings. He taught in Judah during the forty years before the capture of Jerusalem, and his book is a vivid picture of those troublous times. He is said to have been carried by the Jews to their exile in Egypt, and there to have been stoned to death because of his opposition to idolatry. The outline of his book is as follows:

chapter 1, introduction; chapters 2-20 may be the prophecies written by Baruch after Jehoiakim had burned the first roll; 21-24, brief notes of warning; 25-28, prophecies of the fall of Jerusalem; 29-31, relating to the exile in Babylonia; 32-45, concerning the history of the two years before the fall of Jerusalem; 46-51, prophecies against foreign nations, especially Babylon; 52, the conclusion, relating the fall of Jerusalem, which some think was added by Ezra.

### LAMENTATIONS.

The book of Lamentations is a poem, placed among the prophecies because it has always been ascribed to Jeremiah. At any rate, the author must have been as familiar as was Jeremiah with the terrible details of the siege of Jerusalem which the poem describes. The poems are in the Hebrew elegiac or dirge metre, each stanza consisting of two or more parallel lines, and each line of two parts, the first of which is the longer—a peculiarly melancholy rhythm. Chapters 1, 2, and 4 are each made up of 22 stanzas beginning with the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet. Chapter 5 also has 22 stanzas, but without the acrostical arrangement. Chapter 3 has 66 stanzas of one line each, but the stanzas are arranged in groups of threes, each line of a group beginning with the same Hebrew letter, the whole in alphabetical order.

### EZEKIEL.

Ezekiel was a priest like Jeremiah, and grew up under Jeremiah's teachings. Nebuchadnezzar, after his second attack upon Judah, carried Ezekiel away captive to a place about two hundred miles north of Babylon, where he was a faithful teacher and leader of the exiles for twenty-two

years. His writings are closely akin to those of Jeremiah in the home land, and some think that the two prophets exchanged manuscripts.

Ezekiel is the most literary of the prophets, as befits one whose work must have been done so largely through the medium of writing. His book is full of magnificent visions, stirring and graphic parables, and bits of eloquent poetry. During the first half of his work, chapters 1-24, the prophet was foretelling to an incredulous audience the coming destruction of Jerusalem. After that stupendous event there was a period of two years' silence, picturesquely represented in the book by chapters 25-32, judgments upon seven heathen nations. The last half of Ezekiel's ministry was consolatory, represented by chapters 33-48, prophecies of the restoration of the Jews from exile.

### DANIEL.

Ezekiel's prophecies had a strong influence upon the Revelation of St. John, but an influence still stronger was exerted by the book of Daniel. This book, though so powerfully prophetic, is ranked in the Hebrew Bible with the historical works, Ezra, Nehemiah, and the Chronicles, showing that Daniel was regarded as a statesman rather than a prophet. Ezekiel's mention of Daniel and many other considerations would show that he was a real person, an exile of the first captivity, in spite of the theory of those that make him to be a literary fiction and his book a "prophecy after the event," written in the times of Antiochus Epiphanes. To be sure, historical events are delineated with greater detail before those times than after, but the book does unfold with accuracy the course of history from the time of Daniel to the time of Christ, giving a wonderful picture of



## HOW TO STUDY THE PROPHETICAL BOOKS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

Messiah's reign. Roughly speaking, in the first half of the book, the portion dealing with Daniel's life, the modest third person is used, and the Aramaic language is employed, as in Ezra where the theme of the history is intimately related to foreign lands. The second half, the prophecies, are written in the first person and in Hebrew.

### HOSEA.

Hosea is the first in order of the twelve "minor prophets," thus distinguished from the four "major prophets," not necessarily because of lesser influence, but because their writings are so much briefer. The Jews reckoned the twelve as but one book. Hosea prophesied in the northern kingdom during about three decades before its fall, a time of great sins against which the prophet preached fearlessly, and of great national disasters. The keynote of Hosea is the infidelity of his wife as typifying the nation's unfaithfulness to Jehovah, and the prophet's reception of his wife back again, typifying the forgiveness with which God would receive His people if they repented. It is probable that Hosea's ministry followed closely that of Amos.

### JOEL.

The position of Joel's prophecy next in order would indicate the belief of those that formed the canon that Joel prophesied in very early times, though some scholars place him after the exile. Nothing definite is known of Joel, but it is gathered from the book that he was a Jew, probably of Jerusalem, and possibly a priest. The book pictures a great plague of locusts, probably as a symbol of the coming invasion of the Assyrians, and the last half of the book comforts the people with the promise of final joy and triumph.

### AMOS.

One of the most inspiring persons of the Bible is Amos, the humble farmer of Judah, who dared to enter the northern kingdom and denounce its sins in Bethel, the centre of calf-worship, and in Samaria. He faced with boldness the chief priest, Amaziah, and probably made a safe escape to write his prophecies. As is suited to its origin, the book is full of images taken from outdoor life. It begins with a series of seven "dooms," winding inward among the nations to Judah, and then, in the eighth "doom," the prophet strikes the northern kingdom itself. There follows a series of vivid visions, and at the close is a burst of sunshine, God's forgiveness of the repentant people. Amos was perhaps the very earliest of the prophets, and he prophesied when the northern kingdom was at the height of its power under Jeroboam II.

### OBADIAH.

The Edomites were the hereditary enemies of Judah. They gave them no help against their foes, and rejoiced in the fall of Jerusalem and the disasters which preceded that event. Obadiah, about whom nothing definite is known, foretold the ruin of Edom and that the Jews would come to possess that kingdom, as actually happened. Some think that Obadiah's book relates to the calamities that befell Jerusalem under Ahaz, and some refer the prophecy to the fall of Jerusalem, and some to much later times. Jeremiah's prophecy concerning Edom follows the lines of Obadiah's.

### JONAH.

The book of Jonah is a remarkable foregleam of the broad spirit animating Paul, and preaches, in opposition

to Jewish exclusiveness, the possibility of God's grace to the Gentiles. Jonah was a prophet of the northern kingdom who (2 Kings 14:25) encouraged Jeroboam II. to enlarge his realm. His book is quoted by his contemporary, Hosea, and by Jeremiah and some of the late Psalms, though certain scholars consider that the book was written after the exile and that the author quoted the Psalms, Hosea, and Jeremiah. Christ, in important passages, speaks of Jonah and the miracle of the great fish in such a way as to imply His belief in the historical accuracy of the book.

## MICAH.

Micah was a prophet of Judah during the reigns of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, being a younger contemporary of Hosea and Isaiah. Jeremiah quotes a prophecy of Micah's as leading to Hezekiah's repentance, and Matthew quotes his prophecy that the great deliverer of the Hebrews should be born in Bethlehem. Like the other prophets of the times, Micah boldly denounced the sins of the nation, idolatry and the oppression of the poor. The book is separated into three divisions, each introduced by the words, "Hear ye."

## NAHUM.

Nahum prophesied to Judah, and the Elkosh where he was born may have been in the southern kingdom, though some think it was in Galilee (Capernaum means "village of Nahum"). He prophesied between the fall of No-Amon, the Egyptian Thebes, about 663 B.C., and the fall of Nineveh in 606 B.C., which he foretells. He makes no reference to the sins of his people, and probably wrote during a period of reformation; his brief prophecy is devoted to predicting the downfall of the Assyrian foe.

## HABAKKUK.

All that we know of Habakkuk is conjectured from his book. It is believed that he was a Levite, a contemporary probably of Jeremiah, and that he prophesied during the years just preceding the fall of Jerusalem. The keynote of the book is the great saying quoted by Paul, "The just shall live by faith." Habakkuk gives a terrible picture of the wickedness of the Chaldeans, and foretells their doom and the final triumph of God's just and faithful people.

## ZEPHANIAH.

Zephaniah, as we are told in the first verse of his prophecy, was the great-great-grandson of King Hezekiah, and prophesied in the days of King Josiah, being therefore a contemporary of Jeremiah. The king mentioned in the prophecy is probably Hezekiah, and the date of the prophecy is probably before Josiah's reforms. The book is a protest against the idolatry and other iniquities of Judah, an announcement of the doom of other nations, and a closing promise of restoration for his own people to Jehovah's favor and to prosperity.

## HAGGAI.

After Cyrus had permitted the first return under Zerubbabel and the foundations of the restored Temple had been laid, the Samaritans, by their slanders, induced Cyrus to put a stop to these operations. Fifteen years passed before the accession of Darius I. gave the Jews new hope. Haggai then arose, and in the four public addresses recorded in his book urged the Jews to complete their task and rebuild the Temple. He is thought to have been older than his contemporary, Zechariah, and to have seen the first Temple.



## ZECHARIAH.

Several circumstances show that Zechariah, though he prophesied at the same time as Haggai, was a younger man. He also devoted himself to urging the people to rebuild the Temple. The keynote of the book is given at the start in Jehovah's words, "Return unto me, and I will return unto you." The opening chapters are occupied with a series of eight visions; then follows a discussion of the nature of a true fast, and the closing portion is a series of predictions of the fall of the enemies of his people and the triumph of the Jews. The many references to the Messiah cause the book to be much quoted in the New Testament. Many recent critics, though admitting the first eight chapters to be Zechariah's, date the remainder either far before or long after the time of Darius I.

## MALACHI.

As "Malachi" means "my messenger" some have held that the name is merely the designation of an anonymous prophet, getting into the title of the book from the first verse of the third chapter; this, however, is not likely. It is thought that Malachi was a priest, and he certainly prophesied after Haggai and Zechariah. The Temple was built, but both priests and people were neglecting the Temple services, while marriages with heathen women were likely to make of Israel a heathen nation. These abuses Malachi rebuked, and thus prepared the way for the reforms of Ezra and Nehemiah. The prophecy closes with a magnificent picture of the coming Messiah and of His herald, the second Elijah, John the Baptist. Thus the closing words of the Old Testament make the most fitting of transitions to the New Testament.

## How to Study the Gospels

In studying the Gospels and in reading them, bear in mind continually the meaning of "Gospel," "good news," and seek to discover the particular good news of each book and each chapter. What evangel did it bring to the ancient world? What does it bring to our modern world? In addition, study each Gospel with an eye to the characteristics of its writer, as noted below.

Compare the Gospels by means of a harmony (that by Burton and Stevens is the best), and designate by underscoring or by vertical marks in the margin what is peculiar to each Gospel. Seek thus to discover the characteristics and special purpose of each book.

It will be interesting and useful to assign a number to each event of Christ's life and each fully reported address or parable, taking them in order as given in tabular form in most teachers' Bibles; then mark these portions in the various Gospels by surrounding each with a blue line, placing the serial number in the upper right-hand corner.

Obtain or make an outline map of Palestine—one without lettering,—mount it on wood, and stick pins at the various places visited by Christ. Extend threads of different colors from pin to pin to indicate Christ's various journeys.

Using the chronological table of Christ's life found in every Bible dictionary, write opposite each of your numbered sections the year in which the event occurred. Make a chain of references to each character, writing opposite each mention of Him the page on which the next mention is to be found. Opposite each section write in blue the page on which the same section number is to be found

in the next Gospel, if the event is recorded elsewhere.

It will be interesting to classify the miracles, as those over nature, those of healing, of resurrection, and indicate this classification in the margin. Do the same for the parables—those of salvation, of growth, of warning, etc. Some will like to underscore all the words of Christ in a certain color, for ready reference. It is especially helpful to trace the most important teachings through the Gospels by a chain of marginal references, noting the relation of each saying to Christ's life and experiences, and noting also the proportion of the teaching in each Gospel, comparing this with the purpose and general plan of each book.

### MATTHEW.

The writers of the Gospels are called the four evangelists. The first three are called the "synoptical Gospels," because they present a more or less connected view of Christ's life. Of Matthew, the writer of the first Gospel, we know only that he was a Hebrew tax-collector, that he left his obnoxious business gladly at the summons of Christ, and that he made a feast for the Master. Many scholars think that he wrote his Gospel first in Aramaic, but we have only the Greek translation. The date of composition is not long after the middle of the first century. Matthew's is pre-eminently the Gospel for the Jews, written to prove to them that Jesus was the Messiah, fulfilling all the prophecies. Note as you read the large number of quotations from the Old Testament—as many as sixty-five. Note also Matthew's plan of grouping the sayings of our Lord and the events of His life according to topics rather than in the chronological order.

### MARK.

The second Gospel was written by John Mark, the son of Mary of Jerusalem and the cousin of Barnabas. He set out with Paul on his first missionary journey, but returned for some reason unsatisfactory to the apostle, who, however, afterwards became his firm friend. Peter (1 Pet. 5:13) refers to Mark as his "son," and to his being with him in "Babylon," that is, Rome. It is thought that Mark wrote his Gospel at Rome and for the Romans, under the guidance and with the help of Peter. Bear this theory in mind as you read, and note the explanations of Jewish terms, the omission of references to Jewish law and of Christ's genealogy, and the use of several Latin words. Mark's is thought to have been the earliest Gospel written, and to have been before Matthew and Luke when they wrote, thus accounting for the many passages that are nearly the same in all three. It was written before the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. The rapid movement and graphic touches of the narrative (the word "immediately" is used forty-one times) point to Peter's aid in the writing.

### LUKE.

The third Gospel was written by Luke the physician, the companion of Paul, who is thought to have been a manumitted slave from the Syrian Antioch. He wrote between 58 A.D. and 65 A.D., and perhaps the Gospel was composed during the two years (58-60 A.D.) when Luke was in Palestine while Paul was in prison at Cæsarea. Luke's is the Pauline Gospel as Mark's is the Petrine. Note in reading it its completeness, its emphasis on the universality of Christianity, its accuracy in medical descriptions, its systematic method, its

preservation of hymns, and the prominence it gives to women.

### JOHN.

As Luke's is the historical Gospel, John's is the great spiritual and doctrinal Gospel. It was certainly written by the Beloved Disciple, and probably between 80 A.D. and 90 A.D., at Ephesus. The book should be read bearing in mind throughout its expressed purpose (John 20:30, 31), to prove that Jesus was the Son of God and the Saviour of the world. It takes for granted a knowledge of what is in the other Gospels, duplicating them seldom and in those cases adding much that is of deep interest, and relating many things which they omitted. It was the last of the Gospels, and could safely insert many facts, such as those concerning Lazarus and the cutting off of Malchus's ear, which the other evangelists were obliged to suppress. In harmony with this, note the absence of the accounts of Christ's birth, baptism, temptation, transfiguration, and ascension. John records no parables and few miracles, but many discourses, giving them at great length, and especially the priceless final discourse of the Saviour. John's is the Gospel also that tells us nearly all we know about Christ's ministry outside of Galilee.

### How to Study the Acts

The Acts of the Apostles (more exactly, "of Apostles," since those of Peter and Paul alone are detailed) was written by Luke, the beloved physician. It will be of interest for the student to note throughout the indications that it was written by a Gentile and physician. It was dedicated to the same man—Theophilus—for whom Luke wrote his Gospel.

The writer had ample opportunity to gather his information from eye-witnesses, and the passages where he drops the third person and uses "we" indicate that he was a companion of Paul in many of his most important experiences.

The book was probably written at Rome, and about 62 A.D., since it closes abruptly with Paul's first imprisonment in 61 A.D., and since later events are not alluded to. Acts has been called "the Gospel of the Spirit"; discover why. Its main purpose is to show how, at first through Philip and Peter but chiefly through Paul, Christianity, whose Hebrew beginnings Luke had traced in his Gospel, was extended to the Gentile world. The programme of the Acts is laid down in the preface, chapter 1:8, and in reading the book the student should mark the beginning of each of the four divisions—Jerusalem, Judæa, Samaria, the uttermost part of the earth.

It will be especially helpful, in studying this book, to assign one-word or two-word titles to the chapters, such as "Pentecost," "Cripple," "Philip," printing them at the head of each chapter and committing them to memory. Also, I advise you to get or make an outline map of the regions covered by Paul's journeys—a map with no lettering—mount it on wood, and stick pins in the places he visited as you come to each in the reading, often reviewing them, and extending threads of different colors from pin to pin to mark the different journeys.

Use for a marker, as you read, a strip of paper divided horizontally to represent the years from Christ's death, 30 A.D., to Paul's imprisonment, 61 A.D., and as you proceed note each event of the Acts at its proper year. Insert also each Epistle at the time when it was written, using ink or



pencil of a different color. Since Acts is a book of beginnings, it will be interesting to note in the margins the various "firsts"—the first evangelistic service, the first deacons, the first missionaries, the first church council, etc. It will be useful also if opposite each mention of a character you write the number of the page that contains the next mention of him, if he enters the history again.

## How to Study the Epistles

The Epistles should be read and studied in the chronological order, and for this purpose the following table of the probable dates of writing will be useful:

- James, 45 A.D.
- 1 Thessalonians, 52 A.D.
- 2 Thessalonians, 52 A.D.
- Galatians, 55 A.D.
- 1 Corinthians, 56 A.D.
- 2 Corinthians, 57 A.D.
- Romans, 58 A.D.
- Colossians, 61 A.D.
- Philemon, 61 A.D.
- Ephesians, 61 A.D.
- Philippians, 62 A.D.
- 1 Peter, 64 A.D.
- 1 Timothy, 64 A.D.
- Titus, 65 A.D.
- Jude, 66 A.D.
- Hebrews, 66 A.D.
- 2 Timothy, 67 A.D.
- 2 Peter, 68 A.D.
- 1 John, 95 A.D.
- 2 John, 95 A.D.
- 3 John, 95 A.D.

Each Epistle should be read at a sitting, and over and over. Make a study of each, and try to master it before going on to the next.

It is well to seek out the main point of each Epistle and all that is related to it, but pass by the minor points, leaving them for a later study.

The best time for the study of the Epistles is when the Sunday-school lessons are in Acts. Whenever an Epistle is studied its place should be found in the history as recorded in Acts, and the student should read there the account of the circumstances under which the letter was probably written, and should also turn back and review Paul's former relations with the receiving church (if you are dealing with one of Paul's Epistles). While studying the Epistle be keen to perceive whatever there is in it that bears on these personal relations.

It is a good plan to write on the margin of each Epistle in your Bible where it was written and when, and all other circumstances connected with it that you can discover.

Make your own synopsis of the Epistle you are studying, compare it with that in the commentary, and write the main divisions and sub-heads on the margins of your Bible.

Give your own descriptive title to each Epistle, as, for Ephesians, "The Epistle of Christian Union," or for James (Dr. Deems's title), "The Gospel of Common Sense." It is well also to give titles to the various chapters.

As in your studies you add Epistle to Epistle, begin to make a study of the doctrines in all of them, tracing, for instance, through Paul's letters his references to the doctrine of a future life, making a chain of marginal references, and comparing the earlier with the later writings on this point, and the general with the personal Epistles, thus gaining a conception of the unity of the teaching. When you have time, you will wish to carry the comparison further, extending your cross references to the Gospels. In a number of Epistles also, especially in Hebrews, you will find many references to the Old Tes-

tament, which you will wish to bring out by cross references.

It will be best to study all the Epistles of Paul together, then all the Epistles of Peter and of John. After you have reviewed all the Epistles, by five or six different writers, make a study of some prominent doctrines in them all, noting their substantial agreement.

It will be most convenient to give our little introductions to the Epistles not in their chronological order, but in the order in which they are printed in the New Testament.

### ROMANS.

The letter to the Romans was written from Corinth at the close of Paul's third missionary journey, and was intended to prepare the Christians in Rome for a visit that Paul proposed to pay them. That they may be well grounded in the gospel, Paul sets forth in a masterly manner the way of life, that it lies through faith in Christ; thus this is one of the most important of all the books of the Bible. Paul also discusses some of the questions that were sure to perplex the Christians in Rome, such as God's design for the future of the Jews, and the relation of Christians to idolaters and their customs. The letter closes with many strong teachings for daily life.

### FIRST CORINTHIANS.

First Corinthians was written at Ephesus during Paul's third journey, in reply to the questions raised by a committee from the church at Corinth. That church was torn by dissensions, different parties favoring different leaders; also, in that dissolute city, some excesses were practised even by the Christians. The purpose of the Epistle is therefore to counsel unity and purity. The close

of the letter, especially the chapters on charity and the resurrection, rise to a sublime height.

### SECOND CORINTHIANS.

The first letter to the Corinthians brought about a reform in that church, but the Jewish party took occasion to attack Paul bitterly. Titus brought the news to Paul, finding him probably at Philippi, whither he had been driven by the riot at Ephesus. At once Paul penned the second letter to the Corinthians, making a sturdy defence, and painting a splendid picture of his missionary life.

### GALATIANS.

Galatia was settled by Gauls from Italy and Greece, but among them were Greeks, Romans, and Jews. Paul had established a church there on his second journey. The Jews made trouble in this church by insisting on circumcision and the exact observance of the Mosaic law, exalting Peter above Paul; thereupon Paul wrote his Epistle to the Galatians to show them that Christ had superseded the reign of law by the reign of grace, outlining the great doctrine of justification by faith rather than by works.

### EPHESIANS.

During his first imprisonment in Rome Paul wrote a glorious letter to the church in Ephesus, which he had built up by three years' work. Ephesians, however, contains no personal greetings, and was probably intended not merely for that one church, but to be sent as a circular letter to all the churches of the region. It emphasizes the unity which should characterize Christians, and sets forth in sentences of the most exalted eloquence the purpose of God in the history of the world. Ephesians and Romans are Paul's greatest writings.

## PHILIPPIANS.

During Paul's first imprisonment in Rome a gift was sent him by the Christians at Philippi, the first church established by Paul in Europe. The Epistle to the Philippians, written from Rome, is an acknowledgment of the gift, and a warm, wise, pastoral letter.

## COLOSSIANS.

The letter to the Colossians was written from Rome at the same time as that to the Ephesians, and was sent by the same messenger, Tychicus. The church at Colossæ was not founded by Paul, but perhaps by Epaphras. The latter brought to Paul the news of certain false teachers who threatened the church, opposing the pure religion of Christ with ritualism, asceticism, and obscure speculations. Paul wrote Colossians to combat these false teachings.

## FIRST THESSALONIANS.

After Paul and Silas, in the second missionary journey, had founded the church in Thessalonica, Paul went on to Corinth. There Silas and Timothy came to him, bringing news of the progress of the Thessalonians, but also telling him that, through looking for the immediate coming of Christ in the heavens, many of them had given up work and fallen into disorder. Paul wrote his first Epistle to the Thessalonians, the earliest of his letters, to correct this error, and other errors that had crept into the church.

## SECOND THESSALONIANS.

Soon after writing the first letter to the Thessalonians Paul learned that the Christians of that church were still disturbed over the expected second coming of Christ, and he wrote them a second letter dealing with the same subject as the first, but treating

the second advent more with relation to the wicked than to believers.

## FIRST TIMOTHY.

Paul's convert, Timothy, was the apostle's companion during his first imprisonment, and after his release Paul put the young man in charge of the important church at Ephesus while he himself went on to visit Macedonia. It was probably from Macedonia that Paul wrote to Timothy his first Epistle, giving him instruction, in the first place, concerning his church, into which heresies had crept, and in the second place giving him some personal advice.

## SECOND TIMOTHY.

The second letter to Timothy, written during Paul's second imprisonment in Rome, is the last of Paul's writings. It tells us something about the apostle's life and the condition of the church between the first and second imprisonments, and makes some mention of Paul's first trial and his loneliness, in which he turned to his beloved friend, urging him to hasten to Rome, though conscious that he might never see him again. The letter is full of earnest parting messages to the young pastor.

## TITUS.

Titus was probably won by Paul on his first missionary journey. He was a Greek, and Paul had sent him on several embassies to Corinth, and had taken him to the famous council at Jerusalem, where he was *not* compelled to be circumcised. After Paul's first imprisonment he had placed Titus in charge of the church in the island of Crete, a difficult post because of the lying, immorality, and fickleness of the people. Therefore, at about the time of the first letter to Timothy, Paul wrote a similar letter



## HOW TO STUDY THE EPISTLES

of advice to Titus. These letters to Timothy and Titus are called the pastoral Epistles.

### PHILEMON.

When Tychicus, during Paul's first imprisonment, carried the Epistle to the Colossians, he carried also a brief personal letter to Philemon, a Christian of Colossæ, whose runaway slave, Onesimus, went back to his master with Tychicus. Onesimus had been converted by Paul in Rome, and this beautiful Epistle intercedes for the slave, introducing him to Philemon as no longer merely a servant but a brother in Christ.

### HEBREWS.

The important letter to the Hebrews is anonymous. Its doctrine is Pauline, but not its style. Still, there are a number of excellent reasons leading many to think that Paul wrote it. If not Paul, Barnabas is a possible author, or Apollos, or Luke. The letter was written before the fall of Jerusalem, and was written to the Hebrew Christians of Palestine, to comfort them in their persecutions. Its purpose is to show them how much better is Christ than all that they had lost in Judaism—superior to the angels, to Moses, and to the ancient priesthood, summing up the old covenant and supplanting it with a better. The Epistle closes with a glorious picture of faith and of other heroic virtues.

### JAMES.

The remaining Epistles are called the "general" Epistles because they were not addressed to any particular church, as were Paul's letters—though that to the Ephesians was really a circular letter. The first, that of James, was written for all the Christian Jews that had been driven from Jerusalem and scattered over

the world. Its author was the earthly brother of Christ, a strict Jew though an earnest Christian, and the honored head of the church in Jerusalem. His Epistle, which has been called "the Gospel of Common Sense," is full of practical exhortations for wise living, and has many points of likeness to the Sermon on the Mount.

### FIRST PETER.

After Peter's work in Palestine of which we are told in the Acts the apostle labored in Asia Minor, and his first Epistle was written to the Jewish Christians of that region. They had been converted by Paul, and Peter writes in full agreement with Paul, citing passages from the Epistle to the Ephesians. The letter shows that its recipients were then suffering persecution—probably that of Nero—and in great need of the consolation and encouragement which Peter gave them.

### SECOND PETER.

Peter's second Epistle was written to the same churches as the first one, and perhaps from Rome, as there is a reference to the apostle's approaching martyrdom. There is a reference to Paul and a citation of Jude's Epistle. The purpose of the letter is to urge faith in the gospel of Christ in the face of all heresies and the presence of all temptations.

### FIRST JOHN.

John wrote his first Epistle for the churches in Asia Minor over which he was the beloved bishop, and at the close of his long life. It was written soon after the fourth Gospel, and as an appendix to it, setting forth its truths more fully and applying them to the daily life of the Christian.

### SECOND JOHN.

John's second Epistle is much like the first, but shorter. In it John calls

himself "the elder," and addresses it to "the elect lady and her children," by which some think he meant a church, and some think he meant an actual person. It was probably written at Ephesus and at about the time of the first Epistle and the Gospel.

## THIRD JOHN.

John's third Epistle is much like the other two, and may have been written at the same time. It is addressed by "the elder" to "Gaius the beloved," some otherwise unknown Christian, praising his hospitality and urging him to continue in good works.

## JUDE.

The Epistle of Jude was addressed probably to Jewish Christians, and its purpose is to warn them against false teachings and encourage them to hold fast to the Christian faith. The writer, Jude (or Judas), was a brother of James, the writer of the Epistle of James, and was therefore another of our Lord's brothers according to the flesh. He wrote this letter before Peter wrote his second Epistle, which makes use of it largely.

## How to Study the Revelation

Some scholars think that the Revelation was written before the fall of Jerusalem; but a strong tradition tells us that John was sent to the island of Patmos by Domitian, and was released after the death of that tyrant. He probably wrote the Revelation on the island or soon after returning to Ephesus, near the close of the first century and in his old age. There are a vast number of agreements between John's Gospel and the Revelation, and the differences in the Greek styles are accounted for by the difference in theme.

The Revelation is the only pro-

phetic book in the New Testament. It is a series of seven visions, which should be clearly marked by the student in his Bible. The first, a vision of the glorified Christ, is followed by brief epistles to the seven churches of Asia Minor. The visions are complicated by the fact that some are in heaven and some are parallel to them and on earth. Scholars are not certain of the interpretation at all points, but the general purpose is clear, the encouragement of Christians by showing the ultimate triumph of Christ and His church. For this reason the book has always been very dear to believers.

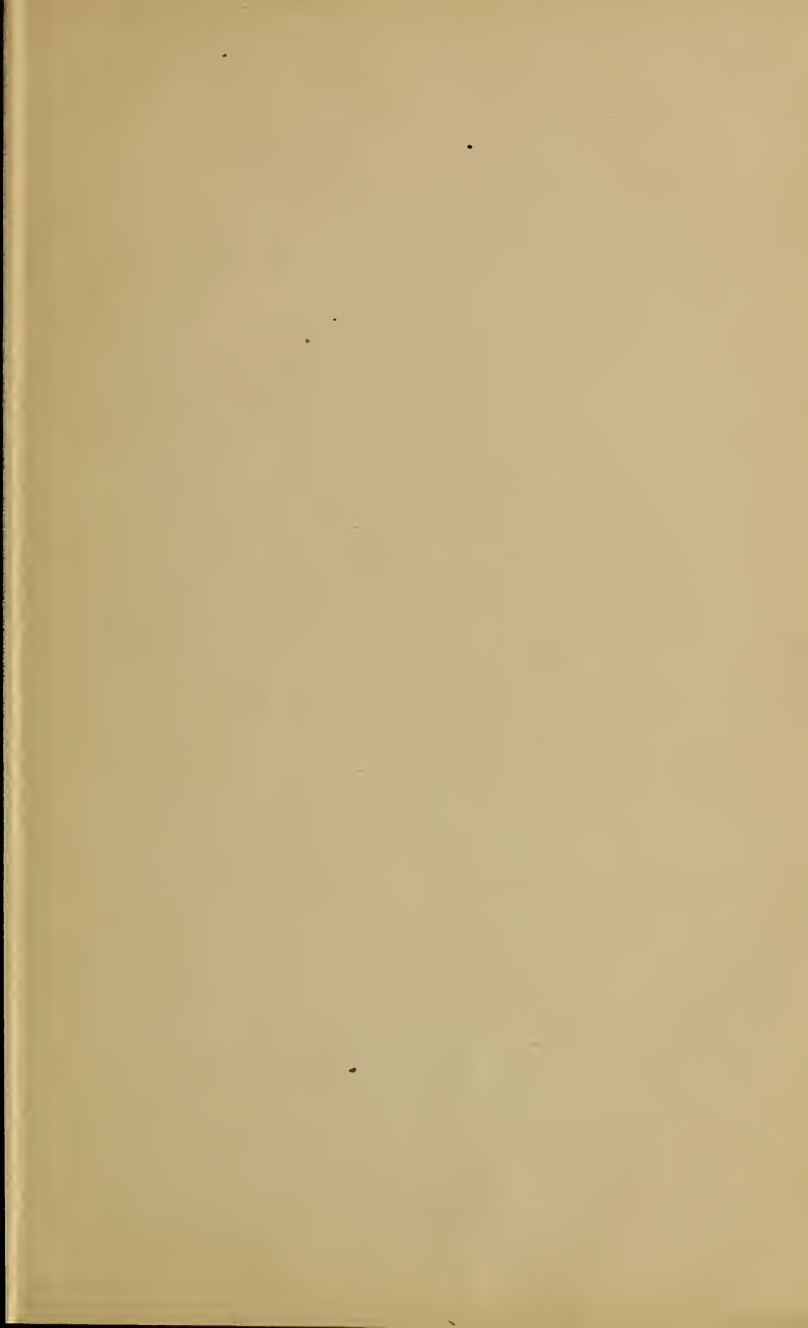
In studying the Revelation the first step is to get its pictures distinctly in mind. Read it straight through, and more than once, merely for the incidents. Memorize the succession of them, and note the relation of the parts to one another. It is well to make a running summary on paper, putting parallel the happenings on earth and in heaven.

Underscore the first mention of each symbol. Note those the meaning of which is not clear, and after meditation upon them turn, if necessary, to a commentary for an explanation.

The Revelation is full of references to the visions and prophecies of Daniel and Ezekiel, and those books should be read in close connection. Mark the points of similarity in the margins of each book, as you discover them.

It is a study full of interest to read in connection with the Revelation John's Gospel and Epistles, noting the frequent use of the same unique expressions, and also the similarity in thought. It will be well to bring out these resemblances and record your studies by cross references written in the margins of your Bible.





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